Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

<u>Listing of Claims:</u>

I claim:

1.–13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) An e-mail system for exchanging messages among users of the system, the system comprising:

> a sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, the sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** having access to a listing of categories;
>
> a receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem** for receiving the message, the receiver ~~agent recognizing the listing of categories~~**subsystem being in data communication with the sender subsystem**;

wherein the sender ~~agent and the receiver agent negotiate~~**subsystem is configured to identify** a category **for the message** based on the listing of categories~~for associating the category with the message~~**, to initiate a negotiation process with the receiver subsystem, to associate the category with the message upon receiving an indication from the receiver subsystem that the category is recognized by the receiver subsystem and to transmit the categorized message to the receiver subsystem**.

15. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, wherein the ~~negotiated~~**recognized** category ~~belongs to the listing of categories~~**is identical to a receiver category**.

16. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, wherein the ~~negotiated~~**recognized** category is mapped from ~~one of the categories belonging to the listing of categories~~**a receiver category**.

17. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, wherein the ~~negotiated~~**recognized** category is a new category added to **a** listing of **receiver** categories.

18. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, further comprising a storage module, the storage module storing **a copy of** the **categorized** message according to the ~~negotiated~~ category **associated with the categorized message**.

19. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 18, wherein the storage module indexes the **copy of the categorized** message according to the ~~negotiated~~**associated** category.

20. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, further comprising an intermediary ~~agent~~**subsystem**, wherein the listing of categories is provided to the sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** through the intermediary ~~agent~~**subsystem**.

21. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 20, wherein the listing of categories is a union of a first listing provided by the intermediary ~~agent~~**subsystem** and a second listing provided by the sender ~~agent~~**subsystem**.

22. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 20, further comprising a sender intermediary ~~agent for~~**subsystem, the sender intermediary subsystem** communicating with said intermediary ~~agent~~**subsystem** to negotiate ~~said~~**the** category.

23. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, wherein said sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** further includes a user interface for presenting the listing of categories to the sender to select the category therefrom.

24. (Currently Amended) A system for classifying messages transmitted by a message exchange system, the message exchange system including a sending subsystem for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver and a receiving subsystem for receiving the message, the system comprising:

    a negotiation module ~~for negotiating a category to be associated with the message and for~~**, the negotiation module** maintaining a listing of categories;

said negotiation module including a sender ~~agent for determining the~~<u>subsystem</u> <u>for initiating negotiation of a</u> category ~~from the listing of categories~~ and a receiver ~~agent~~<u>subsystem</u> for providing the sender ~~agent~~ ~~with~~<u>subsystem with an indication that the category is acceptable to</u> <u>the receiver system,</u>

<u>wherein the sender subsystem is configured to identify the category for the</u> <u>message based on</u> the listing of categories<u>, to initiate a negotiation process with</u> <u>the receiver subsystem, and to associate the category with the message to obtain</u> <u>a categorized message upon receiving an indication from the receiver subsystem</u> <u>that the category is recognized by the receiver subsystem</u>.

25.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein said sender ~~agent~~<u>subsystem</u> has access to a listing of sender categories and is operative to deduce the category from the listing of categories maintained by the negotiation module and the listing of sender categories.

26.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, wherein the category is a common category belonging to the listing of sender categories and the listing of categories maintained by the negotiation module.

27.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, wherein the category belongs to one of the two listings and is mapped to a second category belonging to the other of the two listings.

28.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, wherein the category belongs to one of the two listings and is a new category added to the other of the two listings.

29.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the message exchange system further includes a plurality of receiving subsystems for receiving the message for a plurality of receivers, said negotiation module further including a plurality of receiver ~~agents~~<u>subsystems</u>, each of said plurality of receiver ~~agents~~<u>subsystems</u> being operative to provide said sender ~~agent with a corresponding listing of~~ ~~categories~~<u>subsystem with an indication that the category is recognized by each</u> <u>receiver subsystem</u>.

30. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 29, wherein said negotiation module is configured to establish a common category for a subset of said plurality of receivers and to associate said common category with the message for said subset of receivers.

31. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein said negotiation includes the use of one or more intermediary ~~agents~~**subsystems**, said one or more intermediary ~~agents~~**subsystems** having access to at least a separate listing of additional categories, and wherein the category is ~~determined~~**identified** from a union of said separate listing of additional categories and the listing of categories.

32. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 31, wherein at least one of said one or more intermediary ~~agents~~**subsystems** is selected by said receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem**.

33. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 31, said receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem** further comprising a search module for searching for and selecting said one or more intermediary ~~agents~~**subsystems**.

34. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 31, wherein at least one of said one or more intermediary ~~agents~~**subsystems** is selected by said sender ~~agent~~**subsystem**.

35. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 24, further comprising a user interface for presenting to a sender the listing of categories for the sender to select the category therefrom.

36. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 35, said negotiation module is configurable through the user interface to either negotiate the category free of interactive input from the sender or to receive an indication of the category from the sender through the user interface.

37. (Currently Amended) A method of managing messages transmitted by a message exchange system, the message exchange system including a sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver and a receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem** for receiving the message, comprising the steps of:

  obtaining a listing of categories;

  providing the listing of categories to the sender ~~agent~~**subsystem**;

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~~determining~~**the sender subsystem identifying** a category ~~to be associated~~

~~with~~**for** the message using the listing of categories;

the sender subsystem communicating the category to the receiver

subsystem;

the receiver subsystem providing an indication that receiver subsystem

recognizes the category; and

associating the **recognized** category with the message **to be transmitted to**

obtain a categorized message.

38.   (Currently Amended)   The   method   of   claim   37   wherein   the   step   of
~~determining~~**identifying** the category includes selecting the category from the listing of
categories.

39.   (Currently Amended)   The   method   of   claim   38   wherein   the   step   of
~~determining~~**identifying** the category includes displaying the listing of categories for the
sender to select.

40.   (Currently Amended)   The   method   of   claim   37   wherein   the   step   of
~~determining~~**identifying** the category includes mapping a second category ~~belonging to~~
~~the listing of categories~~**recognized by the receiver subsystem** to the category.

41.   (Currently Amended)   The   method   of   claim   37   wherein   the   step   of
~~determining~~**identifying** the category includes adding a new category to ~~the~~**a** listing of
receiver categories and mapping the new category to the category.

42.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 further comprising the steps of:
        identifying an intermediary, said intermediary having access to a second listing of
                a plurality of categories;

wherein the step of ~~determining~~**identifying** the category includes concurrent use of both
the listing of categories and the second listing of the plurality of categories.

43.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein the step of obtaining the
listing of categories includes:

        obtaining a first listing of a first plurality of categories from a first intermediary,

retrieving a second listing of a second plurality of categories from a storage location maintained by said receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem**,

producing the listing of categories from a union of the first listing and the second listing.

44. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 further comprising:

storing the **categorized** message together with an indication of the category associated therewith.

45. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 44 further comprising:

segregating the **categorized** message based on the indication of the category.

46. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 44 further comprising:

indexing the **categorized** message based on the indication of the category.

47. (Currently Amended) A method of transmitting a message to a receiver for a sender in a message exchange system, the sender having a sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** for sending the message and the receiver having a receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem** for receiving the message, the sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** having access to a listing of categories ~~recognized by the receiver agent~~, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining a destination address from the sender for identifying the receiver ~~and the receiver agent~~;

receiving information from the sender to be included in the message;

the sender subsystem negotiating a category with the receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem, the category being identified by the sender subsystem** based on the information and the listing of categories;

associating the category with the message **to categorize the message only upon receiving an indication from the receiver subsystem that the category is acceptable**; and

transmitting the **categorized** message to the receiver ~~agent, the message being associated with the category~~**subsystem**.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47 wherein the step of negotiating the category includes selecting the category from the listing of categories.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47 wherein the step of negotiating the category includes mapping a second category belonging to the listing of categories to the category.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47 wherein the step of negotiating the category includes adding a new category to the listing of categories and mapping the new category to the category.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47, further comprising:

    selecting an intermediary, the listing of categories being maintained by the intermediary; and

    obtaining the listing of categories from the intermediary.

52. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium containing computer program instructions for classifying messages sent over a communications network by a message exchange system, the message exchange system including a sender ~~agent~~**subsystem** for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver and a receiver ~~agent~~**subsystem** for receiving the message, said computer readable medium containing instructions for:

    providing a listing of categories to the sender ~~agent~~**subsystem**;

    ~~negotiating~~**causing the sender subsystem to initiate negotiation with the receiver system to agree on** a category ~~to be associated with~~**for** the message ~~using~~**, the category being selected according to** the listing of categories; and

    associating the category with the message **upon receiving an indication from the receiver system that the category is acceptable to the receiver subsystem**.

53. (Currently Amended) The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein the step of ~~negotiating~~**negotiation** includes at least one of: selecting the category from the listing of categories, mapping a second category belonging to ~~the~~**a** listing of **receiver**

categories to the category, and creating and mapping a new category belonging to the listing of **receiver** categories to the category.

54. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 52, containing further instructions for producing a user interface, and wherein the instructions for negotiating the category include displaying the list of categories to the sender for selection and receiving from the sender an identification of the category through the user interface.

55. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein the instructions for associating the category with the message include inserting an indication of the category in a section of the message.

56. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein the instructions for associating the category with the message include inserting an indication of the category in a header of the message.